

SMART Goal Setting

Have you ever wanted to do something but didn't know how to get started? SMART goals can help you get where you want to be by clearly outlining how you will reach your goal. The format of a SMART goal allows you to see if you have met your goal or not; there is no gray area with these goals. SMART goals are helpful when one is planning on making life changes like adopting a healthy lifestyle and losing weight. It is good to dream big but remember to be SMART.

What is a SMART Goal?

A SMART goal is:

1. Specific.

A specific goal is detailed, focused, and clearly stated. Everyone reading the goal should know exactly what you want to do, there is no gray area.

2. Measurable.

A measurable goal is quantifiable, meaning you can see the results.

3. Attainable.

An attainable goal can be achieved based on your skill, resources, and current health state.

4. Relevant.

A relevant goal applies to your big picture goal and health vision.

5. Time-limited.

A time-limited goal has specific timelines and a deadline. This will help motivate you to move toward your goal and to evaluate your progress.

Here are two examples of SMART goals:

"I will eat three pieces of fruit every day of the week; I must buy 21 pieces of fruit at the store."

"I will walk during my lunch break for 30 minutes 2 days a week."

How do I write a SMART goal?

1. Start by identifying what it is you want to achieve, i.e. exercising more, eating more fruits and vegetables.
2. Be specific and write it down in one sentence. Try not to use vague phrases such as "I want to..." If you are too vague, then how will you know when you reach your goal? Use an action word to describe what you want to achieve. Using an action word makes sure your goal is measurable. An example using an action word is: "I will exercise for at least 30 minutes 3 days during the week."
3. Make sure your goal is realistic, given the resources that you have. A goal set too high may set you up for failure, whereas a goal set too low will fail to challenge and motivate you. If you currently don't have any set exercise routine start out small by incorporating it in 3 days a week vs saying you will go 5 days a week. Change takes time and is possible.
4. Make sure your goal is related to your health vision/long term goal.

5. Identify a reasonable time frame to complete your goal. Is this a weekly goal or a monthly goal?

I have a SMART goal, what do I do next?

Now you can develop a plan for achieving your goal. Find ways to achieve your goals by planning ahead.

- . Make grocery lists with healthy foods
- . Schedule time to exercise in your calendar
- . Have a day for meal planning and prep
- . Set up exercise days with a friend or group
- . Pack your gym bag the night before

Next steps

Once you have established your goals you must assess and adjust your goals. You may have setbacks; they are a natural part of behavior change. The important take away from setbacks is that you can get back on track and learn from them. Identify the obstacles and find an escape route so when you are faced with them again you are ready with a strategy for success. Finally, you must monitor your progress and adjust accordingly. If your goals are no longer challenging, make new ones. If your goals are too challenging and are unrealistic, change them to be attainable if effort is put forth. Small changes lead to big changes!

Adapted from the Mayo Clinic and College of Nurses Ontario

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/weight-loss/in-depth/weight-loss/art-20048224>

<http://www.cno.org/Global/docs/ga/DevelopingSMARTGoals.pdf>